



From Analog to Virtual: Visual Stylizations of Humanoid Characters Across Media

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Abstract. Visual stylization and its impact on different aspects of the perception of digital human beings are commonly debated. This study investigated how fictional and non-fictional characters are represented in various media from the perspective of digital humanoid character design. Based on Zangwill's theory of Moderate Aesthetic Formalism, this study focused on the formalistic aspect of visual analysis and interpretation of media artifacts ranging from older media such as paintings to newer media, such as animations, interactive video games and mobile apps. This paper also explores several case studies of how humanoid digital characters are represented via visual stylizations across different media. This article underlines the importance of visual stylization as an opportunity to find unique and innovative ways of communicating with visual means.

Keywords: *animation; avatar; character design; digital human; moderate aesthetic formalism; new media; visual style.*

1 Introduction

Visual stylization across different media is a common phenomenon in current society. For example, during Halloween or comic conventions, fans wear the costume of their favorite characters and pose together with other fans in character while taking group photos for remembrance. Live-action versions of characters from comics such as the Avengers (Marvel Studios), X-Men (21st Century Fox), and DC Superheroes (DC/Warner) are used in movies and television shows. Fans of famous cartoon characters create fan art of those characters and share it online. Even the costumes of cartoon characters play a pivotal role in storytelling [1]. In other words, visual stylization is an important cultural phenomenon in our digital society.

Several empirical studies have been conducted to examine, for example, the use of agents in virtual learning, avatar interaction in virtual worlds, the uncanny valley of avatar facial expressions, and gender representations in games. However, the construction of avatars or digital humans in relation to character design has yet to gain momentum in academic research. The pervasiveness of digital humans in digital society has been taken somewhat for granted. This may